
Blighted Property Review Committee
Thursday, April 21, 2011
Certification Hearing
Meeting Report

Mr. Lucky called the Determination Hearing to order at 6:10 pm.

Mr. Lucky announced that the purpose of the hearing was to consider if the conditions of the properties on the agenda met the conditions set by the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law of 1945, as amended and the City of Reading Blighted Property Review Committee Ordinance, and could be determined as blighted.

BPRC Attendance: D. Luckey, D. Reed, A. Grant, W. Bealer, M. Candelario

Staff Attendance: L. Kelleher, S. Haver, M. Mayfield

Mr. Lucky asked Ms. Mayfield, attorney from the City's Law Department, to conduct the hearing. She explained the hearing procedures and summarized the blighted conditions as set forth in the City's Blighted Property ordinance.

338 Madison Ave, North 4 St LLC aka George Hutchinson, owner(s), 155 Phillips Park Dr South Williamsport Pa 17702, Purchased June 2008 CONTINUED FROM FEBRUARY CERTIFICATION HEARING

Resolved codes issues

Resolved delinquent taxes.

Water service issue to be corrected by April 19th.

BPRC Vote and Announcement of Decision

Due to the findings from City staff, the Chair will request a motion to certify 338 Madison Avenue as a blighted property or to remove it from the target list.

Ms. Mayfield noted that Madelyn Fudeman, Esquire, legal counsel for the property owner is present.

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Ms. Reed to table 338 Madison Avenue until the May 19th Certification Hearing. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Mayfield asked the Committee to adjust the agenda to take 229 North 4th Street first due to the presence of the property owner's legal counsel, Madelyn Fudeman, Esquire. The Committee did not object.

1. 229 N. 4th St., owned by Lobos Three LLC aka Ben Epstein, 1455 E 15th St Brooklyn NY 11230, Purchased November 2005

Ms. Mayfield asked the property owner's legal counsel to step to the podium. Attorney Fudeman was provided with a copy of the property packet.

Ms. Mayfield asked Ms. Kelleher if she received, reviewed and completed the Summary Sheet and if the Summary Sheet was an accurate representation of the supporting documentation. Ms. Kelleher replied affirmatively.

Ms. Mayfield entered the property packet into the record and reviewed the documents and affidavits submitted and attached as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on March 14, 2011.
- Notice posted on the property on March 24, 2011
- Delinquent water charges of \$1,529.69
- Water Service On
- Gas Service N/A
- Electric Service On
- Delinquent Property Taxes totaling \$23,850.37 for 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010
- The City Building Official reports that the building appears occupied and requires Maintenance
- Property Maintenance reports that there citations for maintenance and trash from 2007, 2008 and 2011.
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling charges of \$789.47
- Liens for 2009 for 2009 Real Estate Taxes

Attorney Fudeman stated that the property owner is entering into a payment plan to pay off the back taxes. She stated that the property owner is willing to negotiate with the City and may be willing to turn the one acre parcel over to the city. She explained that the property is one acre and contains three (3) buildings. She explained that the property manager assigned to this property disappeared. She noted that the property owner has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars into the property. She asked the Committee to consider tabling the property until the negotiations are completed. She stated that the Committee certifies the property the owner may be unwilling to negotiate. She expressed the belief that it would be best if the property was sold.

Ms. Mayfield explained that the Committee is only considering the Determination of the property at this hearing. She stated that the Certification hearing would not take place until June.

Mr. Haver described the buildings on this one acre parcel. He expressed the belief that the property owner only invested in the building that contains apartments. He stated that the windows are missing and/or broken out in the other two (2) buildings.

Ms. Fudeman stated that the property owner invested in all three (3) buildings.

Mr. Lucky explained that the Committee's goal is to see buildings rehabilitated and to make sure improvement progress continues.

Ms. Fudeman stated that it makes no sense to put new windows in buildings when demolition is under consideration. She asked the Committee to consider working toward a mutually beneficial resolution, rather than taking an adversarial approach by conducting these hearings.

Ms. Mayfield explained that the ordinance that authorizes these proceedings for properties that have not complied with the City's codes regulations. She explained that the Determination phase is only the initial step in the multiple part process.

Public Comment

Ms. Mayfield inquired if anyone present would like to comment on the subject property. No one responded.

Vote

Mr. Grant moved, seconded by Mr. Candelario, to determine 229 North 4th Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Mayfield asked Ms. Fudeman to stay in communication with Mr. Haver.

Ms. Mayfield asked the Committee to adjust the agenda to take 237 S 6th Street due to the need for translation services. The Committee did not object.

2. 237 S 6th St, owned by Khoa Nhu Tran, 1221 Butler St Reading Pa 19601, Purchased March 1996

Ms. Mayfield asked the property owner to step forward. Mr. Tran stepped forward with the translator provided by the City Quochung Ho Vo, from Global Arena.

Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Mr. Tran and provided him with a property packet.

Ms. Mayfield asked Ms. Kelleher if she received, reviewed and completed the Summary Sheet

and if the Summary Sheet was an accurate representation of the supporting documentation. Ms. Kelleher replied affirmatively.

Ms. Mayfield entered the property packet into the record and reviewed the documents and affidavits submitted and attached as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on March 14, 2011.
- Notice posted on the property on March 24, 2011
- No delinquent water charges
- Delinquent taxes for 2010 and 2011
- Water Service On
- Gas Service Off – meter removed 10-3-05
- Electric Service Off
- The City Building Official reports that the building is vacant and deteriorated.
- Property Maintenance reports that there are numerous codes citations from 1999, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008.
- Delinquent Recycling charges of \$171.67.
- Liens totaling \$1,386 for 2009 RE Taxes and 2004, 2006 and 2008 Recycling

Mr. Tran through his interpreter stated that he tries to pay his taxes and bills. He stated that the property is vacant but he still pays his water charges. He stated that he cancelled trash and recycling services.

Ms. Mayfield inquired if the property is vacant. Mr. Tran stated that the property has been vacant for many years. He stated that the prior tenant never paid his rent and he also stated that the City condemned this particular property.

Mr. Haver stated that Mr. Tran applied for building permits and for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as the building is located within a Historic District. He stated that all permits have recently been approved.

Mr. Lucky encouraged Mr. Tran to continue making improvements to the property so it can be legally occupied.

Mr. Tran promised to comply with all the City's regulations.

Mr. Candelario noted the need for Mr. Tran to comply with rehab timelines.

Mr. Tran stated that many buildings in Reading are vacant and in similar condition.

Public Comment

Ms. Mayfield opened the floor for public comment. Kimberly Talbot, Executive Director of the Human Relations Commission stepped forward. Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Ms. Talbot.

Ms. Talbot stated that she is familiar with many of Mr. Tran's properties and fields tenant complaints about the property conditions. She offered a list of other problem properties. She stated that tenants often call with complaints about lack of utilities and maintenance issues. She explained that she recently relocated a tenant from one of Mr. Tran's properties that did not have electric service.

Ms. Mayfield stated that a copy of the addresses supplied by Ms. Talbot would be made part of the record.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Candelario moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to approve the determination of 236 South 6th Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

C. 515 N 4th St, owned by Domingo Tejada, PO BOX 418 READING PA 19603, Purchased May 2007

Ms. Mayfield asked the property owner or his representative to step forward. No one stepped forward.

Ms. Mayfield asked Ms. Kelleher if she received, reviewed and completed the Summary Sheet and if the Summary Sheet was an accurate representation of the supporting documentation. Ms. Kelleher replied affirmatively.

Ms. Mayfield entered the property packet into the record and reviewed the documents and affidavits submitted and attached as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on March 14, 2011.
- Notice posted on the property on March 24, 2011
- Delinquent water charges of \$24.87
- Delinquent Taxes totaling \$396.81 for 2011
- Water Service Off
- Gas Service Off – meter removed 10-16-06
- Electric Service Off
- The City Building Official reports that the building is vacant, deteriorated and has no open building permits.

- Property Maintenance reports that there are numerous maintenance related citations in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2011.
- No Delinquent Recycling charges
- No Liens

Mr. Haver stated that Mr. Tejada intends to retain the services of the contractor who is currently working at the property next to his. He stated that the proper permits have been pulled.

Public Comment

Ms. Mayfield opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Ms. Reed moved, seconded by Mr. Candelario, to approve the determination of 515 North 4th Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. 112 S 6th St, owned by Angela Brazzle, 2206 Upper Gap Rd Coatesville Pa 19320, Purchased April 2006.

Ms. Mayfield asked the property owner to step to the podium. No one stepped forward.

Ms. Mayfield asked Ms. Kelleher if she received, reviewed and completed the Summary Sheet and if the Summary Sheet was an accurate representation of the supporting documentation. Ms. Kelleher replied affirmatively.

Ms. Mayfield entered the property packet into the record and reviewed the documents and affidavits submitted and attached as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on March 14, 2011.
- Notice posted on the property on March 24, 2011
- Delinquent water charges of \$3,497.45
- Water Service Off
- Gas Service Off – meter removed 9-16-07
- Electric Service Off
- Delinquent taxes totaling \$308.88 for 2011
- The City Building Official reports that the building is vacant and deteriorated and that no building permits were pulled.
- Property Maintenance reports that there are numerous maintenance related citations in 2000, 2007 and 2009. Also noted was a citation for unlawful renting in 2009.
- Delinquent Recycling charges totaling \$294.59
- Liens of \$3,504.13 for water and recycling.

Public Comment

Ms. Mayfield opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Grant moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to approve the determination of 112 South 6th Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

5. 123 S 6th St, owned by Ketty Antoine, 331 N 6th St Reading Pa 19601, Purchased August 2003

Ms. Mayfield asked the property owner or his representative to step forward. No one stepped forward.

Ms. Mayfield asked Ms. Kelleher if she received, reviewed and completed the Summary Sheet and if the Summary Sheet was an accurate representation of the supporting documentation. Ms. Kelleher replied affirmatively.

Ms. Mayfield entered the property packet into the record and reviewed the documents and affidavits submitted and attached as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on March 14, 2011.
- Notice posted on the property on March 24, 2011
- Delinquent water charges of \$2,842.87
- Water Service Off
- Gas Service Off – meter removed 10-8-05
- Electric Service Off
- Delinquent Taxes totaling \$1497.29 for 2011
- The City Building Official reports that the building appears occupied, that maintenance is needed and that no permits are pulled.
- Property Maintenance reports that there are numerous citations for maintenance issues in 1995, 1996, 1998, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling charges of \$330.24
- No Liens but 2007, 2008, 2009, totaling \$2,129.10 for RE Taxes

Public Comment

Ms. Mayfield opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward to speak.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Candelario moved, seconded by Mr. Grant, to approve the determination of 123 South 6th Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

6. 125 S 6th St, owned by Esther & Gary Gebhard, 521 N Funk Rd Boyertown Pa 19512, No purchase date listed

Ms. Mayfield asked the property owner to step to the podium. No one stepped forward.

Ms. Mayfield asked Ms. Kelleher if she received, reviewed, completed the Summary Sheet and if the Summary Sheet was an accurate representation of the supporting documentation. Ms. Kelleher replied affirmatively.

Ms. Mayfield entered the property packet into the record and reviewed the documents and affidavits submitted and attached as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on March 14, 2011.
- Notice posted on the property on March 24, 2011
- Delinquent water charges of \$86.06
- Water Service Off
- Gas Service Off – meter removed 4-20-98
- Electric Service Off
- Delinquent taxes totaling \$4,578.97 2004-2010
- The City Building Official reports that the building is vacant, maintenance is needed and permits have not been pulled since 2006.
- Property Maintenance reports that there are numerous maintenance related citations from 2005 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010
- Delinquent Recycling charges N/A
- Liens of \$1,015.40 for 2009 taxes.

Public Comment

Ms. Mayfield opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

***Note:** Later in the hearing Ms. Mayfield read a letter from the property owner's legal counsel announcing that the property owners do not intend to defend their rights and wish to turn the property over to the City at no cost. Ms. Mayfield entered the letter into the record.*

BPRC Vote

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Mr. Candelario, to approve the determination of 125 South 6th Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

7. 334 Chestnut St, owned by Allison Little, 330 Pine Street, Reading PA, No Purchase Date Listed

Ms. Mayfield asked the property owner or his representative to step forward. Ms. Little

stepped forward. Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Ms. Little and provided her with a property packet.

Ms. Mayfield asked Ms. Kelleher if she received, reviewed, completed the Summary Sheet and if the Summary Sheet was an accurate representation of the supporting documentation. Ms. Kelleher replied affirmatively.

Ms. Mayfield entered the property packet into the record and reviewed the documents and affidavits submitted and attached as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on March 14, 2011.
- Notice posted on the property on March 24, 2011
- Water delinquency totaling \$1,577.12
- No Water service
- Gas Service N/A
- Electric Service OFF
- The City Building Official reports that the building is vacant, requires maintenance and no permits are pulled
- Property Maintenance reports that there are citations for maintenance issues in 1999, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010
- Delinquent Recycling charges N/A
- Liens totaling \$13,169.42 for 2007, 2008, 2009 taxes and 2004, 2007, 2008 Recycling

Ms. Kelleher stated that Deputy City Clerk Michelle Katzenmoyer reported that this property was addressed by the City's Board of Health in 1999, when the Board of Health declared properties as public nuisances prior to demolition. The Board of Health ordered the demolition of a building located at the rear of this parcel. She provided copies of the Board of Health minutes to the Committee and Ms. Little.

Ms. Mayfield entered the Board of Health minutes into the record.

Ms. Little requested 60 days to begin making the necessary improvements. She stated that she bought the building as a tax write-off. She stated that she purchased the property in either 1990 or 1992 when she graduated from Vo-Tech.

Ms. Mayfield explained the blighted property process noting that the process provides 60 days between the Determination and Certification hearings.

Mr. Lucky encouraged Ms. Little to rehabilitate the property for residential reuse.

Ms. Little noted her plan to retain the services of a contractor. She stated that her school work keeps her very busy.

Public Comment

Ms. Mayfield opened the floor for public comment. No one came forward to speak.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Grant moved, seconded by Mr. Candelario, to approve the determination of 334 Chestnut Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved with Mr. Bealer abstaining. Mr. Bealer noted that the ordinance prohibits the Committee from having contact with the property owner after the notice is mailed. He stated that as his in-laws reside next to the property owner, he had contact with the property owner after the notice was mailed.

8. 922 Penn St, owned by Amado Brito, 108 N Front Street, Reading PA, Purchased March 2001

Ms. Mayfield asked the property owner or his representative to step forward. Mr. Brito stepped forward and stated that he required an interpreter. As a Spanish interpreter was not available, the matter was tabled until the May 19th Determination Hearing. New notices will be mailed and posted.

9. 615 Church St, owned by Susan Moser, 1823 Cotton St Reading Pa 19606, Purchased January 2005

Ms. Mayfield asked the property owner to step to the podium. No one stepped forward.

Ms. Mayfield asked Ms. Kelleher if she received, reviewed, completed the Summary Sheet and if the Summary Sheet was an accurate representation of the supporting documentation. Ms. Kelleher replied affirmatively.

Ms. Mayfield entered the property packet into the record and reviewed the documents and affidavits submitted and attached as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on March 14, 2011
- Notice posted on the property on March 24, 2011
- Delinquent water charges totaling \$1,680.85
- Water Service ON
- Gas Service On
- Electric Service On
- Delinquent taxes totaling \$779.31 for 2009 and 2010
- The City Building Official reports that the building appears occupied and requires maintenance.

- Property Maintenance reports that there are citations for maintenance issues from 2006 and 2007.
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling charges totaling \$1,011.30
- Liens of \$2035.58 for 2007 and 2008 RE Taxes

Mr. Haver stated that Ms. Moser moved into this property after 1823 Cotton Street entered bankruptcy. He stated that copies of utility bills were provided as evidence of residency.

Ms. Mayfield directed the Building Inspector to request an interior Codes and Trades inspection. Mr. Haver will provide the contact information.

Public Comment

Ms. Mayfield opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Grant moved, seconded by Ms. Wolfe to table 615 Church Street until the May 19th Determination Hearing. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Mayfield suggested taking the next two (2) properties together.

10 & 11. 945 and 947 Court St., owned by Brandon Bui, 125 Brettwood Dr Egg Harbor Twp NJ 08234, Purchased March 2010

Ms. Mayfield asked the property owner to step to the podium. No one stepped forward.

Ms. Mayfield asked Ms. Kelleher if she received, reviewed, completed the Summary Sheet and if the Summary Sheet was an accurate representation of the supporting documentation. Ms. Kelleher replied affirmatively.

Ms. Mayfield entered the property packet into the record and reviewed the documents and affidavits submitted and attached as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner of both properties via first class and certified mail on March 14, 2011
- Notice posted on both properties on March 24, 2011
- 945 Court -
 - Delinquent water charges totaling \$434.53
 - Water Service On
 - Gas Service N/A
 - Electric Service On
 - Delinquent Taxes totaling \$337.69 for 2011
 - The City Building Official reports that the property is undergoing demolition

- due to structural deficiency
 - Codes reports citations for trash and maintenance from 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010
 - Delinquent Recycling totaling \$448.59
 - Liens for the cost of demolition to be determined
- 947 Court -
 - Delinquent water charges totaling \$434.53
 - Water Service Off
 - Gas Service N/A
 - Electric Service Off
 - Delinquent Taxes totaling \$270.69 for 2011
 - The City Building Inspector reports that the property is undergoing demolition due to structural deficiency
 - Codes reports citations for trash, weeds, and maintenance from 2005, 2009, 2010
 - Delinquent Recycling totaling \$93.53
 - Liens for the cost of demolition to be determined

Public Comment

Ms. Mayfield opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Candelario moved, seconded by Mr. Grant, to approve the determination of 945 Court Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Ms. Reed, to approve the determination of 947 Court Street as a blighted property.

Ms. Mayfield read a letter from the legal counsel of 125 South 6th Street regarding the property owner's intent to turn the property over to the City at no cost. She entered the letter into the record for 125 South 6th Street.

12. 1154 Spring St., owned by Keldia Cabrera, 1945 Wickford Pl Reading PA 19610, Purchased June 2005

Ms. Mayfield asked the property owner to step to the podium. No one stepped forward.

Ms. Mayfield asked Ms. Kelleher if she received, reviewed, completed the Summary Sheet and if the Summary Sheet was an accurate representation of the supporting documentation. Ms. Kelleher replied affirmatively.

Ms. Mayfield entered the property packet into the record and reviewed the documents and affidavits submitted and attached as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on March 14, 2011.
- Notice posted on the property on March 24, 2011
- Delinquent water charges in the amount of \$14,514.22
- Water Service Off
- Gas Service N/A
- Electric Service – no account
- Delinquent Taxes totaling \$4,787.20 for 2008, 2009, 2010
- There is no report from the City Building Official.
- Property Maintenance reports that there are citations for maintenance, weeds and trash from 2006, 2007, 2009
- Delinquent Recycling charges N/A
- Liens totaling \$2,908.98 for 2009 RE Taxes 2008 taxes.

Public Comment

Ms. Mayfield opened the floor for public comment. No one came forward.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Candelario moved, seconded by Mr. Grant, to approve the determination of 1154 Spring Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Mr. Candelario, to adjourn the Determination Hearing.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher, Secretary